

Consequences Committee Student Discipline and Judicial Council

In recent years, the Head of the Upper School assembled a Consequences Committee to review all aspects of the disciplinary system, including the procedures for investigating student misconduct employed by administrators, the operations of the Judicial Council, and the imposition of consequences. Committee members evaluated the fairness and effectiveness of current policies and compared them to procedures for dealing with student misconduct at schools similar to Catlin Gabel, at both a local and national level. The committee's goal was to recommend a series of best practices for all aspects of the school's disciplinary system.

Following the collection of these various strands of information from parents, faculty, Judicial Committee members, administrators and students, the committee discussed findings and formulated a series of recommendations. The results of the findings suggest that the school community supports the practices and procedures around discipline but that there is a need to improve communication on such practices and procedures.

To that effect, we would like to state the following in regard to student discipline:

In keeping with the school's progressive tradition, Catlin Gabel's disciplinary system seeks to promote the ethical growth of the individual student in the context of a safe, tolerant and mutually supportive community. The community operates on trust and is not defined by a large number of rules: community members are instead enjoined to treat themselves, others, and the campus environment with respect and care. When the Head of the Upper School and/or the Dean of Students determines that a serious violation of these standards has occurred, the student and his or her academic adviser meet with the Head and/or Dean to discuss the incident. The student is then generally asked to meet with a panel of the school's Judicial Council, which consists of three faculty members appointed by the Upper School Head and six students elected by upper school students. Parents of the student in question are informed that a violation of community standards has occurred and that their student will be required to appear before the Judicial Council at this point.

Students appearing before the Council are encouraged to ask their academic advisor or another adult member of the community to appear with them for support and counsel. Involving the adviser from the beginning of the process provides important benefits. The advisor has already become aware of the details of the incident at the initial meeting with the Upper School Head and thus can communicate and advocate effectively during Judicial Council proceedings. The advisor is generally more effective working with the student in helping the student come to terms with the situation, and the presence of a trusted adult seems to motivate students to be more honest from the outset.

At the Judicial Council hearing, the student is asked to recount the incident to the panel and to reflect on their motives and conduct. The panel then attempts to reach consensus

on an individualized set of recommendations designed to help the student learn from the experience and reintegrate into the community. These recommendations are sent to the Upper School Head and Dean of Students; they are responsible for enforcing them.

While the Judicial Council and the administration attempt to fit the consequences assigned to the particular circumstances of the violation, certain violations are likely to result in suspension (consumption of drugs or alcohol at a school function) or expulsion (serious cases of bullying and harassment; multiple violations of the school's drug and alcohol policy; selling drugs on campus). A serious violation of the school's policies also generally entails that violation being reported on a student's Common Application to college.

The judicious use of suspensions is a useful practice for helping students and the school community to learn from and heal after a serious infraction. Typically the goal is either the separation of the student from the community for a period of time or to provide him or her with an abrupt change in their daily lives and a time for serious reflection on how they want to shape their teenage years—or a combination of both. The length and type of suspension, as well as conditions associated with the suspension, are tailored to the circumstances of the individual student so as to maximize the potential for learning and growth.

The school provides a somewhat structured re-entry program for students who have been suspended. The school works on establishing processes that allow for students to feel that they are being welcomed back into the community as full participants and not in some sort of probationary status.

Following a disciplinary action, the school is prepared to advocate for the student to colleges to which he or she applies. The school works to articulate how the infraction fits into the larger context of the student's experience at the school, including the school's best understanding of the student's intellectual, social and interpersonal growth during their time at Catlin Gabel.

In the case of significant violations of the school's ethical standards, the Head of the Upper School may choose to communicate the nature of those violations to the general student body, and details the consequences assigned for those violations. The names of the students in question are not revealed in these communications.